

critical digest

VOL. II No. 39

May 26, 1952

The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

New York Openings This Week

The Rehearsal-President, 5/27/52. David Ross presents limited engagement of recent Equity Library production of 17th Century English comedy with Ann Leonard, Tom Turner and Anthony Verne. Postponed from last week...Sunday Breakfast-Coronet, 5/28/52. Final play in ANTA series. New comedy by Emery Rubio and Marian Bell with Anthony Ross, Cloris Leachman and Douglas Watson. Directed by Stella Adler...First Lady-City Center, 5/28/52. NYC Theatre Company's closing spring bill features Helen Gahagan and Nina Foch in revival of George S. Kaufman and Katharine Dayton comedy.

Digests of Current Reviews

New Faces of 1952-Royale, 5/16/52. Daily critics, with one exception, enjoyed Leonard Sillman's new revue which introduces 17 talented newcomers to Broadway. Ronny Graham, Alice Ghostley, Robert Clary, June Carroll and Virginia de Luce received top praise. Several noted that John Murray Anderson's adept staging and Raoul Pene du Bois' sets played vital roles in presenting the new talent. Watts, Post, was dissenter, mostly because he felt sketch material was dated. McClain, Journal American, and Coleman, Mirror, agreed with Post reviewer that first night audience was over-enthusiastic, but they enjoyed the proceedings. Mirror man did comment that revue may not please the tired business man who may want more down to earth humor and more chorus beauties. Atkinson, Times, raved over everything except the burlesque of a Restoration comedy. Kerr, Herald Tribune, complained mildly that some of the sketches were old stuff, but the entire proceedings were bright and cheerful. He tabbed Eartha Kitt and Ghostley as stars of the evening.

Tovarich-City Center, 5/14/52. Trade paper reviewers looked upon NYC Theatre Company production of 1936 Robert E. Sherwood adaptation of Jacques Deval comedy as an amusing period piece that sadly enough isn't topical at this moment in history. Uta Hagen, Herbert Berghof and Luther Adler were all complimented for fine acting jobs. Harry Horner once again received more compliments for his scenery than for his direction. Beaufort, Christian Science Monitor, still found it a pleasant comedy, while Shipley, New Leader, billed it as an amusing fairy tale done in several modes of acting. Gabriel, Cue, thought it a nice play, but dated.

Of Thee I Sing-Ziegfeld, 5/5/52. Musical comedy field's chief dissenter, Marshall, Nation, enjoyed current revival of 20 year old Pulitzer Prize winner of Kaufman-Gershwin-Ryskind. Except for Jack Carson the rest of the company had the necessary competence and gusto, she commented. George Jean Nathan still considered it lively. Both were pleasantly surprised with Paul Hartman in famed role of Wintergreen. WCBS Bill Leonard was very disappointed, feeling everyone would have been happier if the title had remained a song to be sung rather than a show to be resurrected.

Variety Reprises Critics Views

"Worst season in years" most critics reported in Variety's annual poll of NY Critics Circle members. Diverse views on wide range of topics filed by aisle sitters. Chapman, News, and Barron, AP, were only critics who okayed past season. Dash, Women's Wear, warned that critics must do more to encourage young playwrights.

' Cumulative NYC Ratings '

D - Daily	W - Weekly	M - Monthly	B - Broadcast
-----------	------------	-------------	---------------

DT - NY Times	DJC - Journal of Commerce	WCM -.Chr. Science Monitor
DH - NY Herald Tribune	DWJ - Wall St. Journal	WC - Commonweal
DN - NY News	DWW - Women's Wear	WCU - Cue
DM - NY Mirror	WB - Billboard	WN - Nation
DC - NY Compass	WV - Variety	WNR - New Republic
DP - NY Post	WCD - Critical Digest	WNS - Newsweek
DJ - NY Journal-American	WGN - George Jean Nathan	WNY - New Yorker
DW - NY World Tele-Sun	WWM -Ward Morehouse	WSR - Saturday Review
DB - Brooklyn Eagle	BC - WCBS Bill Leonard	WT - Time
DL - L.I.Press	BL - New Leader-WEVD	MP - Park East

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them not if they think they will be hits. "So-so" means the critic did not state directly if he recommends the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

THE FOURPOSTER-10/24/51	PROS: 19 Con: DH DP WGN WWM BLWC WNY None: DWJ WN WNR WSR
GIGI-11/24/51	PROS: 18 Con: DT DM DC DP DW WWM BLWC WNR WSR WT None: BC
GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50	PROS: 29 Con: WN
I AM A CAMERA-11/28/51	PROS: 22 Con: DN DJ WCM WNR WN So-So: DT
THE KING AND I-3/29/51	PROS: 29 Con: WN
THE MALE ANIMAL-4/30/52	PROS: 21 None: WGN WWM WC WN WNR MP
THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51	PROS: 26 Con: WCD WGN None: WN MP
MRS. McTHING-2/20/52	PROS: 20 Con: DM DJ BC DL WNR WT WGN None: WNR MP
OF THEE I SING-5/5/52	PROS: 11 Con: DH DJ DL DWW WB WV WCD BC WC WCU WNY WT
PAINT YOUR WAGON-11/10/51	PROS: 21 Con: DH DP DJ WV WWM BC WC None: WNR WSR
PAL JOEY-1/3/52	PROS: 28 Con: BL None: WNR
POINT OF NO RETURN-12/13/51	PROS: 25 Con: DW BL WN WNR WT
THE SHRIKE-1/15/52	PROS: 25 Con: DW WCD WGN BL WN
SOUTH PACIFIC-4/7/49	PROS: 29 Con: WT
STALAG 17-5/8/51	PROS: 22 Con: DM WCD BL WCU WNY So-So: DN
THREE WISHES FOR JAMIE-3/21/52	PROS: 18 Con: DP DJ WCU WT BC WCM WSR None: WWM WN WNR MP
TOP BANANA-11/1/51	PROS: 23 Con: DP DJ BL None: WCM WN WNR WSR

' Off Broadway '

Tennessee Williams will give readings from his poetry and unpublished works at Circle in the Square on Sunday, May 25 at 2:30 PM and Monday, May 26 at 8:30 PM...Masque and Lyre plays Gilbert & Sullivan's The Sorcerer May 29 to 31, then takes a vacation from June 5 to June 25, reopening June 26 with HMS Pinafore and Trial By Jury...Blackfriars' The Restless Flame closed...Journeyman present The Nightingale Sang Too Late, poetic drama by John Richards, at Provincetown...Concert performance of Marc Blitzstein's Regina given June 1 at Kaufman Auditorium with some members of original cast, Lillian Hellman will act as narrator...Mae Desmond's Children's Theatre production of The Five Little Peppers proof to Shanley, Times, that small fry's theatre favorites remain popular in spite of TV. Produced at Walton Community Center, sponsored by Board of Education's Division of Community Education, the Philadelphia group will give a complete series in the fall...Originals Only will present Love In Our Time, a modern tragedy by Anita Grannis, next month.

' Green Room Department '

TRAVEL ADVICE...American travelers heading for Paris can skip the strictly un-French "Folies" advises Pearson, NBC Critic at Large, because cast is made up of "foreigners"...The King and I show has proved an important promotion device for getting Americans to Siam, Morehouse, WT&S, reports. Morehouse has just returned from a three week round the world flight and finds Broadway unchanged.

ON REVIVALS...A good sprinkling of revivals not only raises the quality level of a given season, but also aids it financially, reminds Burr, Playbill. It proves that theatre goers are more interested in the quality of what they see than in mere modernity. Fresh approaches and earnest, professional theatre workers are the necessary ingredients for a successful revival.

CRITICS PANEL...Reader suggestion to Variety that an audience panel be set up to offset influence of critics condemned by producer Alexander Cohen in note to the trade paper. Best way to get around critics, Cohen writes, is to produce better shows. Panel idea called childishly absurd, because contemporary theatre goer isn't an "average man" and wouldn't be interested in an "average man's" opinion on a show.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Business of naming "best" performances seems rather unfair and foolish, comments Sheaffer, Eagle, because there is no basis for comparison between two distinct performances...Watts, Post, thinks the NY News review of Tovarich may have been written by John O'Donnell, political columnist, instead of John Chapman.

USO CONTINUED...Publicity has created unfair impression that only big name entertainers are working for USO-Camp Shows program, points out Rice, Post. Actually 55 units have traveled throughout the world and gave over 2400 shows to armed forces last year. All except headliners are paid.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...House Un-American Activities Committee hearing of Clifford Odets brought out fact that playwright left Communist Party when the Communist reviewers started to attack his work and his ideas...Undiscovered, unproduced genius is the rarest thing on earth, John van Druten insisted to Hawkins, WT&S. I Am A Camera author knows that if a writer has a fine play it will be produced...Actors are people despite their faults, David Alexander, Pal Joey director told Bald, Post. Both actors and domestic animals crave attention.

' Theatre News Round Up '

Council of Living Theatre launched subscription drives in Washington, Baltimore and Wilmington...Town Hall Club honored Jose Ferrer for his many theatre activities... "Theatre World" selections as "Most Promising Personalities of Broadway Stage" for current season include: Virginia de Luce and Ronny Graham of New Faces, Audrey Hepburn, Gigi, Marian Winters, I Am A Camera, Diana Herbert, The Number, Kim Stanley, The Chase, Helen Wood, Pal Joey, Patricia Benoit, Glad Tidings; Also Tony Bavaar, Paint Your Wagon, Charles Proctor, Twilight Walk, Peter Conlow, Three Wishes for Jamie, Conrad Janis, The Brass Ring, Eric Sinclair, Legend of Lovers, and Dick Kallman, Seventeen...Actors Equity and Stock Managers Association quarrel on summer stock terms at a deadlock...Eddie Dowling to replace James Barton in Paint Your Wagon...Philadelphia to sponsor theatre in the round at Fairmount Park run by Theron Bamberger...Washington, D.C. Faith of Our Fathers will not run this summer...Association of Theatre Benefit Agents named Abe Baronoff, Hellinger Theatre, the most cooperating theatre treasurer...Billboard's Donaldson Award ballots being mailed out.

- - - - -
' Random Drama Notes '
- - - - -

BOOKS..."Show Biz" in seventh edition...Abel Green, Variety, editing anthology for Henry Holt Co. entitled "Sprice of 'Variety'"...Holt also to publish biography of Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. by Letitia Fairbanks and Ralph Hancock in the fall, and a volume of memoirs by George Jessel in the following spring...Tenth Annual "Players Guide" by Paul Ross, issued by Equity...1952 issues of "Blueprint for Summer Theatres" available at ANTA, and "Summer Directory" new edition on news stands..."Mrs. McThing" to be issued as children's book by Oxford University Press...Random House has published "The Shrike" and "The Grass Harp."...Doubleday to publish Ezio Pinza autobiography "Across a Crowded World." Knopf's "The World of George Jean Nathan" won rave reviews from all drama and book critics...Indiana University Press issued B.Ifor Evans' "Language of Shakespeare's Plays."

FILMS...London production of South Pacific filmed for private files of Rodgers & Hammerstein...Clifford Odets' film version of his own "Clash by Night" to get simultaneous premieres in Lond, Paris and Rome...Tennessee Williams' The Rose Tattoo being considered for film production by Hal Wallis if Breen Censorship Office okays new version of script...Warners' to make new film version of "The Jazz Singer" with Danny Thomas...MGM to produce "Julius Caesar," directed by John Houseman and featuring an all star cast...Columbia Pictures production of "Pal Joey" may star Rita Hayworth.

RECORDS...Desto Records released three long playing albums of show music including music by Jerome Kern, George Gershwin and disc with tunes from Showboat, Roberta, Pal Joey and Connecticut Yankee played by George Sherill trio...Sylvester, News, co-author of I'm In Love with Dodgers tune...Banner Records to make Yiddish English version of "Pirates of Penzance."

TV & RADIO...Philip Morris Playhouse series this summer to feature repertory company of top collegiate actors who have appeared on series earlier...Friars Club signed with Leo Loeb and Seymour Felix to make series of films featuring talents of their members in NY and LA...Joseph Santly and Dan Blum, Theatre World, preparing TV show entitled "Theatre World"...Eddie Dowling's Dublin Players to make filmed series for video...Life With Father released for radio and TV...Robert Downing, stage manager of Seventeen, won \$2000 Dr. Christian radio script award...Future programs on Celanese Theatre include When Ladies Meet and On Borrowed Time...WLIB broadcast one hour program in memory of Canada Lee with Ray Robinson, Bill Stern and Oscar Hammerstein II.

- - - - -
' Hits Revisited '
- - - - -

Year's run and several important cast changes have altered some of the values of The King and I reports Hobe, Variety. Though general level of performances remains remarkably high, Gertrude Lawrence's singing is now spotty with some painful flatting. Yul Brynner has grown in the role as King, while Dorothy Sarnoff seems to have improved. Stephanie Augustine who replaced Doretta Morrow is an eminently acceptable successor, vocally and dramatically. Ronnie Lee lacks skill and authority of role he took over from Johnny Stewart, and Sandy Kennedy has become a trifle careless about his enunciation...Stalag 17 which just completed its first year on Broadway and which is preparing for a nation-wide tour, is still one of the funniest and most exciting plays in town, commented Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun. Major replacements are all first rate. Stage manager deserves credit for keeping performances tauter and well-proportioned.

- - - - -
' Legit Stuff '
- - - - -

Shows that closed include Conscience and Don Juan in Hell...Kessler on display at NY Public Library, 2nd floor...Theatre ceramics by Ernest Moore on display at "Show Shop"...Twelfth Night Club Award to Carol Stone...Betty O'Neil replaced Elaine Stritch.

